

City of Taunton Office of the Mayor

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May 25, 2021

Council President Christopher Coute
Members of the Taunton Municipal Council
City Hall
15 Summer Street
Taunton, MA 02780

Dear Councilors,

I respectfully submit the FY2022 budget for your review and approval. As we enter the new fiscal year, we continue to address the effects of the COVID-19 public health pandemic.

I am proud of the response of our team of city employees, our public safety officers, and first responders. Throughout the pandemic, we have kept our community safe and our city government operating.

Our team worked on multiple fronts to combat COVID-19 and meet the changing needs of our city residents. To assist individuals, non-profits, and local businesses impacted by the shutdown of our state, we created emergency funds. This allowed us to help our friends and neighbors keep food on the table and our businesses keep their doors open.

My office created the COVID-19 Hotline, worked to provide COVID-19 testing, recorded weekly updates, and re-vamped our city website to include the most current COVID-19 information. We used social media to share important information and we engaged our citizens in a discussion about COVID-19 with a Telephone Town Hall.

Collaborative efforts with our neighboring communities resulted in Taunton opening a regional vaccine clinic to provide greater access to the community.

To help get our kids back to school as quickly as possible, the City allocated \$2 million in CARES Act funding for ventilation upgrades and other safety measures.

With the uncertainty around state funding and revenue, we took the proactive steps of implementing a spending and hiring freeze to avoid layoffs and ensure the financial stability of our city.

One of our goals coming into office was to make our city government more efficient and less costly. We made progress in aligning our city budget more closely with our expenses and we found creative ways to save money without eliminating services.

We took many steps to increase our efficiency, productivity, and accountability as a city. Recognizing that we need to be bold in changing antiquated systems that hinder progress, we have delivered an updated City Charter for your approval and created an Elections Office, both of which have been recommended for many years. We are moving forward on plans for a new public safety facility, and targeted investments are being made to bring our roads and sidewalks into good repair.

To ensure we provide the highest level of oversight and accountability of taxpayer dollars, we are requesting new funding for the establishment of a Chief Financial Officer and Office of Procurement. City finances are of paramount importance, and the creation of these offices will result in strong fiscal management, centralized oversight, strict adherence to state and federal laws, and concentrated buying power.

There has long been a need for updated technology across city government. A fully online permitting system is being implemented, tablets are being utilized for work order processes, and we will be procuring new software for finance and time management.

As we look to the coming year, we must continue to be mindful of the need to be fiscally responsible in safeguarding taxpayer money. We believe the proposed preliminary budget provides the right balance of responsible spending, targeted investments, preserving services, and meeting future needs of the community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shaunna". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor Shaunna O'Connell